

VALOR

VETERAN ★ ALLIANCE

September 2020

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Colleagues and friends,

Welcome to the fall semester. While this is not the semester we would ideally choose to be ushering in, this is where we are - trying to continue campus operations and NDSU's research, teaching, and service missions in as safe a manner as possible during a pandemic. These are stressful times and there are no simple answers, but I want to acknowledge that I understand that the pandemic generates more than just the fear of illness and its impacts. It has also caused economic concerns, caretaking issues, physical and mental well-being strain, socialization challenges, tremendous uncertainty, and other challenges that amplify individuals' stress level exponentially.

The World Health Organization's recently published illustrated guide - [Doing What Matters in Times of Stress](#) - is a sketchbook filled with simple guidance to help you deal with the stress this type of event generates. You will note that this month's *Call to Action* is to be kind to yourself. This requires you to acknowledge that these are not normal times and you are operating within very different parameters than you were last year at this time. Allow yourself the space to cope with, and adjust to, the complex variety of stressors you are dealing with. Give yourself permission to do the best you can given the current situation, without beating yourself up for not doing more. Negative self-talk is unproductive and damaging and you don't need that now (or ever). We are human beings having a human reaction to a stressful event that has a multitude of impacts. The goal is to get through this as best we can—so, please be kind to yourself.

Doing What Matters
 in Times of Stress:
 An Illustrated Guide



World Health Organization

If you have any student veteran matters that you need assistance with, do not hesitate to reach out to me or Jim Stoddard. We will continue to be available regardless of changes in operations. As always, thank you for your commitment to VALOR and our student veterans at NDSU. Stay safe and well.

Carol Cwiak, J.D., Ph.D.
 VALOR Faculty Liaison

Did you know...

- The [Supportive Services for Veterans Families \(SSVF\) program](#) has been modified during COVID-19 to give SSVF grantees broader flexibility in delivering SSVF services. SSVF's primary mission is to provide services and assistance that lead to permanent housing outcomes; however, given the pandemic, VA is also prioritizing other types of services that were traditionally more scarce.
- NDSU has a [student emergency fund](#) intended to help students with unforeseen financial emergencies that might otherwise prevent them from continuing their college education. The amounts funded average between \$50 - \$500 and do not need to be paid back.



VCO Update
Jim Stoddard

You can visit Jim on campus at the Veterans Educational Training Office in Ceres 329; or by phone at 701-231-9706; or by email at james.stoddard@ndsu.edu.



NDSU staff and faculty been working all summer to prepare for safe resumption of campus-based instruction. You will see many signs around the campus regarding traffic flow, appropriate physical distancing, hygiene, etc.

A [face mask requirement](#) is currently in place for all situations where physical distancing of six feet or more is not possible. Classrooms, halls, shared-use facilities, sidewalks, and other spaces traversed regularly by others are all areas where masks must be worn. #ProtectTheHerd

During Welcome Week, several of NDSU's student veteran allies will meet over lunch with newly arrived military-connected students. These events are called Affinity Dinners, and are a fairly new addition to Welcome Week activities. The idea is to give students of similar backgrounds an opportunity to meet each other and see that they're not alone. It's also a chance for them to meet informally with staff and faculty that connect to that community, increasing the students' sense of belonging on campus.

The Bison Student Veterans (BSV) student organization is also planning to host some kind of mixer for military-connected students early in the semester. The event will have to be adapted to COVID-19 precautions, but aims to build camaraderie and support for each other as non-traditional students.

In September, the US Department of Veterans Affairs' "VITAL" program office should be resuming its monthly webinar series on supporting student veterans. These free presentations are designed to give college faculty and staff improved insight into a range of issues impacting student veteran success. Last year, we had some great feedback on every presentation. Hopefully you can attend one or all of these sessions!

Each session lasts about an hour, and is a live event, but hopefully we'll also have a way to provide a recorded version for those unable to attend at the scheduled time. Last year, these were held on the first Wednesday of the month (Sept – Nov only) at 1pm CT, with our local discussion immediately following, so I expect a similar schedule this fall. When I have it, I'll forward the link information so you'll be able to connect to the webinar from anywhere.

Due to COVID-19, I probably won't arrange a location where those who were available gathered to watch these webinars together as we did last year. But I'd still like to facilitate some discussion on the concepts presented with respect to us locally at NDSU, so I'll probably just plan a separate, optional Zoom meeting for anyone who wants to participate. It's also possible to earn free continuing education units accepted by several counseling/mental health provider accrediting agencies through participation in these VITAL webinars. More to follow as the details come out.

The College Board has a very easy-to-follow, one-stop information shop for military-connected students to earn college credit through examination through CLEP exams. Visit www.CLEP.org/military. During this time when students may not be fully enrolled in classes, CLEP exams could be an efficient way to stay on graduation timeline.

Current National Guard/Reserve and active duty can have their exam fees paid for by the Defense Activity for Non-traditional Education Support (DANTES), while separated veterans with remaining GI Bill eligibility can apply for reimbursement of exam fees from the VA. Any student can enroll in a free, online CLEP preparation program through a charitable foundation called Modern States (www.modernstates.org). This program offers high-quality, free online learning courses designed to prepare anybody to pass a CLEP, AP exam, the Accuplacer, or several other standardized tests. The Modern States Education Alliance also offers to pay CLEP exam fees (while funds are available) to those who complete the preparation courses.

Assuming university-sponsored travel is allowed at the time, the Bison Student Veterans are still hoping to take a small group to the Student Veterans of America's annual National Convention in January 2021. This will be a great networking and learning opportunity that should be energizing not just for those that attend, but for the rest of the group that will benefit from all the information and ideas the attendees bring back to campus with them.



Veteran's Voice

Craig Schwinden

VALOR Student Veteran Representative

Fellow Student Veterans,

Welcome back to the school year. I hope you had as best a summer as you could under the circumstances. I attended school this summer as the pandemic "forced" me into an internship. So, I took a couple of other classes to maintain my full-time status with the VA and now I'm actually a little further ahead than I thought I would be at this point...a positive in a world full of negatives!

As you know by now, NDSU is bringing students back and will be using what is called a HyFlex teaching method. I encourage you to follow the procedures instituted by

the university and make sure you are comfortable with your situation. Keep in contact with your professors, instructors and your advisor. Everyone, including those of us here at VALOR, are here to help you achieve your goals. Hopefully all will be well, and we can get back to pre-COVID campus life soon.

In the meantime, please follow the sites I have listed below. We have previously published these links in this newsletter for assistance with your educational benefits. You can get information here on your benefits, any changes to them regarding coronavirus, and university policies regarding class processes for the fall semester; stay informed!

- <https://benefits.va.gov/gibill/>
- <https://www.fargo.va.gov/>
- https://www.ndsu.edu/admission/fall_2020_plan
- <https://fargond.gov/city-government/departments/fargo-cass-public-health>
- <https://www.ndsu.edu/counseling/>

Lastly, please check out our student veteran for the month of September, Ben Snyder. Ben is a junior here at NDSU. Ben is a specialist in the North Dakota Army National Guard and serves as a Combat Engineer. Check out his profile included in this issue!

As always, please feel free to contact me with comments or article suggestions at craig.schwinden@ndsu.edu. Hope to see you on campus...take care.



Staff Sgt. Misty Poitra and Senior Airman Chris Cornette, 119th Medical Group, collect throat swabs during voluntary COVID-19 rapid drive-thru testing for members of the community while North Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers gather test-subject data in the parking lot of the FargoDome, May 3, 2020. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Chief Master Sgt. David H. Lipp)

IN RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH — COMPLETE S.A.V.E. TRAINING

The North Dakota Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, Lonnie Wangen, has challenged all North Dakotans to accept the challenge of completing the S.A.V.E. training to help prevent veteran suicides. This challenge involves two steps and requires about 25 minutes of your time to complete.

First step: Add the contact information below to your phone so you are prepared to help.

CONTACT NAME: SAVE
 PHONE: 800-273-8255 (24-hour suicide lifeline), press 1 for veterans
 WEBSITE: <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>
 TEXT: 838-255 to chat
 INSTANT MESSAGE: veteranscrisisline.net/chat

Second step: Register and complete the 23 minute online training at: <https://psycharmor.org/sign-up/ndsave/?gid=351472&unDaDziBt7dbY>

The S.A.V.E. video was a collaborative effort between the Veterans Administration and PsychArmor Institute and was designed to empower viewers with the basic knowledge of what the signs may be for someone who is struggling with thoughts of suicide and ideas on how to help.



THE SPOTLIGHT

Name: Ben Snyder

Major/Minor: Emergency Management
Natural Resource Management

Originally from: Crystal, MN (15 miles NW of Minneapolis)

Current city: Fargo

Career plans after college: I am currently close to being promoted to E5 (Sergeant) in the North Dakota Army National Guard. After I get my promotion I plan to switch to active duty and do 20 years active duty. Once I am active, I want to go to the Ranger Assessment and Selection and be a part of the 75th Ranger Regiment.

Military Service/Awards: United State Army; competing in the North Dakota Best Warrior Competition this August.

NDSU activities/engagement: Member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon; Bison Student Veterans; and, Hacky Sack Club.

Community activities/engagement: Volunteering with Folkways group and at the emergency food pantry

Hobbies: I love to play sports; do anything related to the outdoors; hunt; go to the gym; and, shoot guns.

Favorite experience/memories/etc. at NDSU: I've had many great experiences in my time at NDSU, some of my most memorable ones are with my fraternity brothers and other events that NDSU does for veterans. It is enjoyable to meet others that have served in different parts of the world and hear about their different stories and experiences.



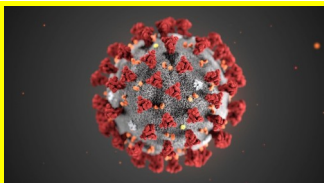
Ben Snyder

CALL TO ACTION: **BE KIND TO YOURSELF**

The uncertainty introduced by the pandemic not only causes stress and anxiety, but also disrupts ingrained habits, norms, and structures. This disruption makes it more difficult to concentrate and be productive. It is frustrating and disappointing when we cannot operate at a level we feel we are capable of operating at (in normal times).

It is important to recognize that these feelings are typical in events like this. Now, more than ever, you need to be kind to yourself and give yourself permission to just do the best you can in the situation you are in. These feelings won't last forever.

The World Health Organization developed an illustrated guide called *Doing What Matters in Times of Stress* designed to help individuals cope with stress during adverse times. The guide provides helpful guidance for self-care strategies that can be incorporated into your daily life. The guide is filled with illustrations and tips and is a very quick read (because it is mostly illustrations). There are also accompanying audio materials available.



NDSU is closely monitoring COVID-19 cases as part of its efforts to maintain a safe campus. You can find information about NDSU case tracking here: <https://www.ndsu.edu/covid19/cases>.

For a concise daily infographic on cases, hospitalization, and death counts see the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services daily posting at: <https://www.facebook.com/ndemergencyservices/>. For detailed data about testing, positive cases, deaths, demographics, etc. see the North Dakota Department of Health site: <https://www.health.nd.gov/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/north-dakota-coronavirus-cases>.





September 2	V-J Day
September 11	Patriot Day
September 18	Air Force Birthday
	Air National Guard Birthday
	National POW/MIA Recognition Day
September 27	Gold Star Mother's and Family's Day

OCTOBER

October 13	U.S. Navy Birthday
October 26	Day of the Deployed

NOVEMBER

November 1	National Veterans & Military Family Month
	Warrior Care Month
	National Family Caregivers Month
November 5	National Veterans Small Business Week
November 10	Marine Corps Birthday
November 11	Veterans Day

DECEMBER

December 1	Civil Air Patrol Birthday
December 7	Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
December 13	U.S. National Guard Day
December 14	National Wreaths Across America



The VA has developed a robust FAQ page for veterans regarding coronavirus symptoms, concerns, treatment, and the impacts the virus has had on resources and services regularly offered to veterans. Find it here: <https://www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/> .



As we continue to weather the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts, face-to-face gatherings continue to be postponed or canceled. Staying connected is important to our well-being as humans. We encourage you to continue your interaction through other mechanisms, such as web chats and social media until we can safely gather again.

NDDVA
facebook.com/NDDVA/

DAV North Dakota
facebook.com/davnorthdakota/

American Legion Post 2
facebook.com/americanlegionpost2/

American Legion Post 21
facebook.com/legionpost21/

North Dakota American Legion
facebook.com/NDAmericanLegion/

Dilworth VFW Post 1223
facebook.com/VFW-Post-1223-106022496155155/

Fargo VFW Post 762
facebook.com/fargovfwclub/

West Fargo VFW Post 7564
facebook.com/VFW7564.org/

North Dakota Veterans Educational Training
facebook.com/VeteransEducationalTraining/

Bison Student Veterans
facebook.com/NDSUBSV/

VALOR
facebook.com/valor.veteran.alliance.organization/